



Derwent and Southill Federation

*We are a Values-led Federation
We respect ourselves; We respect others; We respect the environment.*



Attendance policy

This school is committed to safeguarding, promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, governors and volunteers to share this commitment.

'Good attendance at school is the single most important factor in ensuring that children and young people have the maximum life chances - attendance is strongly linked to educational achievement. Promoting positive school attendance is therefore everyone's responsibility.' (Islington Community of Schools, 2014)

Philosophy:

Derwent Primary School and Southill Lower School believe that regular attendance is vital for effective learning. Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise the importance of establishing strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.

Research shows that excellent attendance is at the heart of good academic achievement preparing children for success as adults. Regular attendance also increases the chance of children developing solid friendships, sharing ideas as well as creating a sense of belonging and community. Children who regularly attend school are also less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour, commit or become victims of crime or abuse.

Poor attendance disrupts the education of all pupils; it reduces social cohesion and disturbs the continuity of the curriculum. Children who do not attend regularly miss out on vital learning as well as key events such as school trips and visitors.

At Derwent and Southill we believe in celebrating excellent, improved and improving attendance as often as possible (see Appendix A); equally, poor attendance will be addressed in collaboration with the Local Authority in a timely and fair manner.

Key Principles:

- Maintaining good attendance at Derwent Primary School and Southill Lower School are the responsibility of everyone in the school community; pupils, parents/carers and all school staff.
- Pupils are expected to attend school and lessons regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support.
- The school will work to ensure that families and pupils feel supported and valued. The school will promote positive staff attitudes to those pupils returning from absences.
- All staff should be aware of this policy and current national guidelines. Staff will be made aware of the registration process and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law as appropriate.
- Parent/carers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn as outlined under section 7 of the Education Act 1996. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly, then the parent is guilty of an offence under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996. Parents whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered support from school in matters of communication.
- If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents/carers are required to notify the school of the reason on the **first day of absence**. If a child is absent without explanation, the school has a responsibility to ensure they are safe. It will be impressed upon parents/carers that it is **essential** that they contact the school early on the first day of any absence.
- School staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal examples. Staff should convey high expectations to pupils regarding attendance and punctuality. A range of strategies will be used to encourage good

attendance and punctuality and staff will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents/carers. Staff will respond to all absenteeism consistently.

- Attendance will be rigorously monitored: preventative and/or supportive action will be taken where there is any cause for concern. Excellent, improved and improving attendance will be celebrated throughout the school year.

Registration:

- Registers will be called promptly at 8.50a.m and in the afternoon session straight after the lunch break and they are completed in the school office in accordance with the codes set out in the register front sheet. The register will close at 9 a.m. and 1.40 p.m.
- Registers will be completed on Arbor, at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and attendance regularly monitored. Pupils not attending are given an absence mark which is either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.
- o **Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason such as illness.**
- o **Unauthorised absences are those absences which are not reasonable or acceptable: for example birthdays, family days out, shopping and non-medical appointments and term time holidays.**
- Where pupils arrive late and the register is still open, they will be marked late but counted as present for the session.
- Where pupils miss registration and do not provide an adequate explanation, they will be marked as late but counted as unauthorised absent.
- Where pupils miss registration but provide an acceptable explanation, they will be marked as late but counted as authorised absent for that session.
- Pupils who arrive late after the registers have closed should report to the office. (The office will subsequently amend the register entry to read "absent late"). The parent will be informed if the pupil is consistently late.

In case of Absence:

- The Office Manager will check all the registers each day, ensuring that all reported absences are marked appropriately, telephoning parents/carers to establish the reason for any unreported absences. Any concerns will be reported **immediately** to the Headteacher or a member of SLT.
- **Parents should contact the school early on the first day of absence.** If no contact is received from the parent/carer of the pupil on the morning of the first absence, the school will contact the parent/carer by telephone, leaving a message if the parent/carer is unavailable. If this action (including further phone calls) does not result in an explanation or no contact can be made, the matter will be referred to the Inclusion Service to ensure the safety of the child.
- Registers will be inspected for absences and lates. Absences will be totalled and analysed for data collection purposes. Parents will be informed if their children are below 96% attendance on a half termly basis. Our Local Authority School Attendance Officer will also hold lateness checks throughout the year as well as meeting with parents to discuss how to reduce absences and improve attendance.

Requests for Absence:

- Wherever possible, parents/carers should avoid making non-urgent medical/dental appointments during school hours. Where this is unavoidable, parents/carers will be asked to provide appointment cards and letters to the Office Manager so they can be recorded.
- It is appreciated for Service Families there may be requests following notice of deployment. To assist us in providing an auditable trail for the Local Authority, parents/carers are asked to produce a copy of their assignment order.
- On rare occasions there is a need for a child to be out of school e.g. music exams, approved sporting activities, funerals, interviews for school places, induction day, day of religious observance written notification is required prior to the date of the event and this may be followed by discussion.
- Parents/carers who wish to take their child out of school should complete the agreed leave of absence form (which will be issued along with a copy of the Central Bedfordshire guide on attendance for parents/carers). The number of days requested will be checked by the Office Manager. The Headteacher or member of SLT will consider this request for absence, with due regard to the LA / National guidance on the authorisation of absence in term time, and reply to the parent / carer (see appendix) noting whether the request is authorised, unauthorised or partly authorised.
- Procedures will allow returning absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other pupils in the class. Parents, pupils and school staff have the responsibility of ensuring that missed work is caught up on.

Children Missing in Education:

If a child does not attend school we cannot guarantee their safety. In respect to safeguarding our pupils, we will investigate through reasonable enquiries any unexplained absences as these can be a sign of abuse¹.

When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown we will make contact with parents and carers, relatives and possibly neighbours using known contact details. We may check with other agencies involved with the family, other local authorities the child is known in and with service families the Ministry of Defence Children's Education Advisory Service.

Where a child is missing for more than 5 consecutive days and all reasonable enquiries have been made, or when a child has moved school and no forwarding address has been given a Child Missing in Education form will be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council. A referral may also be made to the police or children's services where a child is deemed to be in immediate danger

Attendance Concerns and Procedures:

- Parents/carers will be promptly informed of any concerns over their child's attendance.
- Registers are monitored very carefully on a weekly basis. If there are any concerns regarding the number of absences/times late, then a member of SLT will contact parents.
- Initially, parents/carers will be contacted by phone if their child's attendance is at risk of falling below 96%.
- Where there is a genuine reason for the absences, the school will work closely with the parent/carer and other agencies if appropriate, to help support the child's return to full attendance.
- Where concerns remain regarding attendance, the phone call will be followed up with a letter, making parents aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance and encouraging them to discuss how to improve attendance.
- Where a child's absence does not improve over the next four weeks a letter will be sent, inviting the parent/carers to come and discuss the situation with the school and the school's Attendance Officer. At this meeting an agreed plan of action will be drawn up to improve the child's attendance.
- If following this intervention there is no improvement, advice will be sought from the school's Attendance Officer, as to what next steps should be taken. At this point, the implementation of the Local Authority penalty notice system will be considered if appropriate.
- In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence, then an individual re-integration programme will be implemented.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Attendance data is available on the DfE View Your Attendance Data Dashboard and from our school website. Consultation will take place with the school and the School Attendance Officer to develop and maintain the attendance policy. The policy will be updated annually but will be immediately amended in the event of changes in local or national legislation/policy. Attendance figures at risk of becoming or which are below 96 % will trigger standardised letters at various points in the year; these will be sent to the pupil's parents/carers.

Attendance procedures will be reviewed half termly by members of SLT and the Governor responsible for attendance. The Headteacher and governing body will review attendance data and procedures at each full governing body meeting.

Policy Review

The Governing Body of our school is responsible for ensuring the review of this policy, and for reporting back to the Local Authority.

Date policy updated: September 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'N' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Signed Neil Parsons (Chair of Governors)

Date of review: September 2027

Legislation which directly Impacts the School Attendance Policy:

The Education Act 1996

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and amendments.

The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999;

The Education Act 2002;

The Changing of School Session Times (England) (Revocation) Regulations 2011.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998;

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003;

The Education Act 2005;

The Education and Inspections Act 2006;

The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007;

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and amendments; and

The Education and Skills Act 2008.

Children Missing in Education 2016.

Promoting the Education of Looked after Children 2014

Appendix A:

Attendance Rewards:

Weekly:

Each child will receive a 100% attendance sticker on a Friday if they have been in school for every morning and afternoon registration each week.

When a class achieves 100% attendance (or the next highest percentage) for the week they will be awarded the attendance bears in sharing assembly. The class will keep the bears until the following week.

Monthly:

Children will participate in a 30 minute session with the P.E. apprentice in their class groups when they have reached 100% attendance for each month. Children will be able to choose their reward with a class vote. The children's names will be displayed on the attendance board.

Half- Termly:

Children will receive bronze, silver and gold leaves to be displayed on the attendance vine located on the attendance board. Children will be rewarded the following:

Bronze leaf: 96%

Silver leaf: 98%

Gold leaf: 100%

Termly:

Each child that receives 100% attendance for the term will participate in a reward afternoon.

Autumn: Christmas Cooking/Craft

Spring: Easter Cooking/Craft

Summer: Picnic/Activity Afternoon

Children who attend for 98% or more of the term will also receive a letter recognising their excellent attendance.

Yearly:

Children who reach 100% attendance for the whole year will become 'Attendance Ambassadors' for the following year and support and encourage their peers to strive for excellent attendance. They will receive an ambassador badge as well as a £10 gift voucher in sharing assembly.

Improved Attendance:

As well as celebrating excellent attendance, Derwent and Southill Lower Schools also recognises the importance of improved attendance. Improved attendance will be recognised in the following ways:

Notes/Postcards home on a half termly basis
Certificates presented termly by the class teacher

Appendix B:

Exemplar letter for use at Derwent and Southill Lower Schools to celebrate excellent attendance:

Dear _____,

At Derwent and Southill Lower Schools we value high attendance levels in our children. This is because it gives them full access to the curriculum and the best chance of success in their education. Children should be encouraged to attend as close to 100% as is possible, barring legitimate illness.

As a school, we would like to take this opportunity to recognise the fantastic attendance of _____ who has attended at the rate of _____. This is in no small part due to the role played by you at home.

Thank you for supporting our school and your child's learning. It is greatly appreciated.

Best wishes,

Mrs Rimmer

Appendix C:

Exemplar letter for use at Derwent and Southill Lower Schools for poor attendance:

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has dropped below the school target of 96% and is currently _____ which is of concern. I am sure that you are aware that attendance below 90% is now classed as persistent absence and may result in involvement from the Local Authority School Attendance Officer.

In order to ensure that we work together to improve your child's attendance I would like to offer you a meeting with me at _____ on _____. At this meeting we will be able to look in detail at your child's attendance pattern and agree on a way forward to ensure that we see this figure improve.

If you choose not to attend the meeting stated above the expectation is your child's attendance will improve and will prevent any further referral being made to the Local Authority's School Attendance Officer. I am happy to accommodate work commitments and can meet outside of the school day if requested.

Yours sincerely

Appendix D:

Exemplar letter for use at Derwent and Southill Lower Schools for persistent absence:

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has dropped below 90% and is now classed as persistent absence. Their current attendance figure is _____.

I would encourage you to attend a meeting with me and the Local Authority School Attendance Officer at _____ on _____. At this meeting we will be able to look in detail at your child's attendance pattern and I will share with you detailed guidance as to what this now means for you and your child. The Local Authority School Attendance Officer will also be at this meeting. By working together we hope to be able to address and improve this worrying situation.

If you are unable to attend the meeting stated above please contact the school to arrange a more suitable date and time. I am happy to accommodate work commitments and can meet outside of the school day if requested.

Yours sincerely